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ABSTRACT

This abstract of a larger study provides a synthesis of the procedures for evaluating classroom teachers. The study was designed on the structured interview technique and 80 interviews were gathered from 40 randomly-selected evaluators and the 40 teachers whom they had evaluated. The criteria on which the interview instrument was based are delineated. These criteria, selected from the literature, and validated for use by an expert panel concern such issues as: the improvement of instruction; the use of educational objectives to guide teaching evaluation; formal plans for teacher evaluation (subject to periodical review); role definitions; training for evaluators; classroom observations; alleviation of tensions resulting from the evaluation process; procedures for resolving differences of opinion; and feedback to teachers. The conclusions derived from analysis of the data together with recommendations by teachers, evaluators, and the investigator for the improvement of teacher evaluation procedures are enumerated. A bibliography pertinent to the literature on teacher evaluation is included. A complete report on the study may be secured from the School Information and Research Service at the address noted above. (PR)

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PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATING CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN CERTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

by

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This investigation studied the procedures for evaluating classroom teachers in Washington. Sought were answers to the following questions:

1. What evaluative procedures are presently in use and how are they valued by educators in the public schools?

2. What are the purposes for which teachers are evaluated?

3. To what extent do evaluative procedures reflect the recommendations of investigators in the field of evaluation?

4. Do those who perceive that evaluation tends to improve instruction also report evaluative practices favoring the recommendations of the literature?

5. What changes in evaluative procedures do educational practitioners recommend?

The study was designed on the structured interview technique for data collection. A total of eighty interviews were conducted with forty evaluators and with forty teachers whom the evaluators had evaluated. Interviewees were selected by randomly sampling the districts subscribing to SIRS, stratified by school enrollments. Individual educators within the selected districts were also chosen by the random process.

The instrument used during the interviews had been previously judged for content validity by authorities in evaluation from Washington and elsewhere in the Nation. The items contained in the instrument were based on criteria selected from the literature and validated for this use by a panel of experts. The criteria included:

A. The primary goal for evaluating teachers should be an improvement of instruction.

B. Each school organization should establish educational objectives to guide the evaluation of teaching.

C. The procedures for teacher evaluation should be described by a formal plan, established and periodically revised through the cooperative efforts of all the professional staff.

D. The development of role definitions for personnel will facilitate evaluation.

E. Evaluators should be given in-service training and their performances evaluated.

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F. The evaluative process should include several classroom observations followed by conferences.

G. The teacher should receive a written copy of an evaluative report to provide an accurate, open communication of necessary changes in teaching.

H. Evaluative procedures should include provision for resolving differences of opinion and alleviating tension or anxiety resulting from the process.

Based on these criteria, an analysis of the data obtained from the study revealed that:

1. The primary purpose for which teachers were evaluated was to improve instruction.

2. Most frequently, teachers were not evaluated in terms of written educational objectives.

3. The majority of school organizations operate with written evaluative procedures. These and subsequent revisions were developed primarily through the involvement of administrators. Many teachers were uncertain of the manner with which procedures were developed. The majority said they didn't know when revisions of procedures had been made.

4. Of those interviewed, 27 per cent said that there were written role definitions for classroom teaching. Twenty-six per cent reported these definitions were unwritten, but understood descriptions of responsibility. Over 37 per cent said there were no role definitions at all.

5. The school principal was either the sole evaluator or had an assistant assigned to help with evaluating teachers. Most evaluators were not evaluated themselves nor were they provided with in-service training in evaluation.

6. Teachers new to a school or new to education were most frequently evaluated once per year using a written evaluative report. Teachers experienced at a school were evaluated less frequently. The majority of teachers did not receive a written copy of an evaluative report.

7. Two or three observations were most frequently held prior to the preparation of a written evaluative report. Conferences between teachers and the evaluators were conducted at least once to complete the process of evaluation. These conferences were assessed as sometimes effective in improving instruction. Specific measures for correcting instructional deficiencies often were not determined during evaluative conferences.

8. The majority of interviewees reported that there were written procedures for appealing the results of an evaluation. More than half of the respondents said feelings of tension or anxiety were rarely or never present during the process of evaluation.

9. Forty-three per cent of the interviewees said the evaluative process usually improved instruction. Nearly 49 per cent reported this improvement resulted "sometimes."

Those whose perceptions held that evaluation usually benefited instruction supported the recommendations from the literature to a greater extent than did the total of responses. Fewer who perceived this benefit to instruction reported more than one observation or conference held in preparing the final evaluative report. This may indicate that improved instruction is due more to the manner of teacher-evaluator interaction than to the number of contacts made during the evaluative process.

Thirty-three recommendations for changes to improve teacher evaluation were given. The suggestions most frequently offered by teachers were:

A. The evaluative process should be a friendly, objective communication between the teacher and evaluator.

B. More observations should be held prior to the development of an evaluative report.

Evaluators most often recommended that:

A. Teachers should participate to a greater extent in the development of evaluative procedures.

B. A self-evaluative instrument should be used by the teachers.

C. Evaluative instruments need to be improved.

D. More time should be available to complete the evaluative process.

E. Evaluators should be trained to evaluate more effectively.

Those who perceived that evaluation usually improved instruction frequently recommended that:

A. The evaluative procedures should be continually re-examined.

B. The purposes for evaluating teachers should be better understood.

From the data obtained from this study, the following recommendations were made by the investigator:

1. Increased emphasis should be given to improving teachers' understanding of evaluative purposes and procedures.

2. The responsibility for developing evaluative procedures should be shared more evenly by all professional groups.

3. There should be better instructional objectives to specify teaching responsibilities. Instructional objectives should be developed by the professional staff.

4. More specific suggestions for improvement should be identified when instructional deficiencies are found.

5. Evaluators should be given in-service training to improve their performance. The work of evaluators should be assessed to improve their effectiveness.

6. Greater attention should be given to improving the manner of holding observations in the classroom than to the frequency of observations.

This report only synthesizes the data accumulated in the study. A more complete account of the findings may be secured by contacting the offices of SIRS. There are many additional questions that emerge from this research which should be given attention by other investigations. Among these are inquiries into the effect of student involvement in the evaluation of teachers, the follow-up of suggestions for correcting instructional deficiencies, the effect of more than one evaluator responsible for the evaluation of a teacher, and the use of less obtrusive observational techniques to overcome the artificiality created by the evaluator's presence in the classroom.

The attached bibliography pertinent to the literature on teacher evaluation may be of assistance to those desiring further study of the subject.

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